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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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SOUL-SIGHT.

"Jesus saith unto him: Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." John xx., 29.

You will remember the circumstances. After the resurrection of Christ, he was seen of the women, then of a few disciples, and then of a great many; the report was noised abroad; and the absent disciples were informed by their fellows that they had seen the Lord, that he was risen from the dead; and though they were bewildered, they seemed to have accepted the testimony, Thomas only standing out. He declared that he would not believe unless he could put his very hand in the very wound, and know that it was indeed He. And so, at a gathering of the disciples, our Master was pleased to call Thomas to him, and to propose to him the very tests that he had demanded. And then, overwhelmed with conviction, Thomas cries out, "My Lord, and my God!" It was impetuous belief then. And Christ says to him: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

We are to take into consideration this fact: that Thomas had consorted with the Saviour, and was not unfamiliar with events that were as remarkable as the resurrection of Christ. He was in the ship, and saw him walking on the water. He was with the disciples, and saw the demons cast out in Gergeza among the Gadarenes. He had seen at Nain the widow's child brought to life again. He had been with them when the ruler's son was restored from death to life. It was not an altogether unfamiliar thing to him. So that when his Master was reported to have been himself raised from the dead, there was no need of such extreme incredulity. We might perhaps pardon some bewilderment and hesitation in a nature that was cautious by its structure; but persistent incredulity had no real excuse in his case. He was asked to believe a fact which he knew was not incredible, because he had seen just such facts. He was asked to believe it on the

SUNDAY MORNING, Oct. 27, 1872. LESSON: LUKE xvii. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 286, 668, "Love divine, all love excelling."

testimony of his fellow disciples. He was not asked to explain it. He was not asked to believe in the whole mystery of the divine power so strangely shown here, but in the fact thus witnessed to by the women, and by his co-disciples.

Nevertheless, you will observe that our Master did not rebuke Thomas; yet he ranked him. He did not say to him that he was deserving of any penalty or punishment, but simply said: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." That is to say, the state of believing is a higher one than the state of doubting. That condition of mind by which one believes a thing, even if he have not seen it, is a higher state of mind than that incredulity which refuses to believe until one has seen. And still further, that state of the mind where it is opened up to spiritual intuitions, and convictions that are supersensuous, is a higher state than that which demands that all spiritual truth and evidence should be brought down to the bounds and reasons of sensuous, material truth. The soul has its own laws of evidence independent of those which are addressed to the senses, important as the senses are, and important as the laws of evidence are. Although they are indispensable, in our present condition and in the present structure of society, they are not the highest nor the best things.

This subject of believing what we do not see, is one that has a great deal of pertinency to thousands of people who do not talk about it. There are thousands and thousands of persons who are sincere in a measure, and in a certain way, and who have a general belief in the existence of God, but who after all have most serious trouble with themselves. They cannot see him. They have never seen him. He does not come to them through any of those channels through which they are accustomed to gather knowledge. He does not present himself within the range of those tests by which we are accustomed to divide between realities and appearances, between truth and the semblances of truth.

Men say,—and feel oftener than they say,—"Is it possible that there can be a God? Is it probable that there would be a God who would not show himself once in a whole life-time, when it would amount to so much? When it would do us so much good if we could have but one hour or one moment of such condescension as that God should reveal himself to our senses, how strange it is that we never see him!" We never do see him. We never hear him. In our utmost exigencies, in our intensest longings, in our extremest anxieties, we call out and are never answered. We

go forward, and he is not there; backward, and we find him not. And men say, "Is it probable that God is the Father and Governor of men, and that he actually exists, and that generations come up, and live on, and form characters on which their destiny is determined, and that he never shows himself to them?" Unbelief makes this very plausible; sorrow makes it very poignant oftentimes; and persons who have been for scores of years believers, so far as they have known, drop into a slough of trouble; and then, when they feel that heart and flesh have failed them, and that they need something more, and when they have called to God and nothing succors them, they fall into weeks and months of skepticism, and say, "There is no God." There is nothing more common in deep natures than an extreme skepticism following extreme suffering, though they rebound from it by and by, usually, if they have true faith, and have had religious culture of the right sort. But for the time being it seems like an obliteration of all the agencies of an over-ruling Spirit.

I shall not undertake to say why this is; but I will suggest a few things which may perhaps assist your doubting thoughts.

It is probable, I judge, that the divine nature cannot be expressed by matter, and that it cannot therefore be subject to the laws or evidences which matter requires. If the divine nature and existence were so reduced as to be understandable through our senses, it would cease to be divine. It may be asked, "How, then, did God manifest himself in Christ?" My reply is, that he laid aside the divine glory, and that you do not see God when you see Christ. You only see glimpses of him. You see only his qualities. You see a certain nature which belongs to him; but not the whole of him. Christ was encompassed, shrouded, obscured, for certain great moral purposes, and was sufficient as showing to men the divine disposition and the divine nature; but that he was the original and full-orbed glory of God he never pretended for himself; and no such pretension was set up for him. He did express God in his essential nature and substance so far as to represent the divine feelings toward men; but that was all.

The controversies of Christ and the Pharisees are very instructive on this point. The last month of our Saviour's life was spent near Jerusalem; he was often in the temple; and there he was questioned by the educated Pharisees and Sadducees. He demanded that they should accept him as divine; and they refused, and said: "We know where you were born; we know who your relations are; and we shall not receive you as divine. What do you do? Where is your evidence?" And what was the reply of

the Saviour? Said he, "Because ye are not of God, ye will not accept me. Because ye have not in you that spiritual instinct or intuition by which the divine is recognized; because you apply to me the laws of historic evidence; because you judge me by the senses—by the eye and the ear; because you measure me by the lower forms of evidence, you do not perceive my divinity."

No man can test poetry by a mathematical formula. Poetry must have its own formula by which it shall be tested. And, said the Saviour: "No man can test me by physical exponents. He who would understand me must have a spiritual nature, and must have spiritual intuition." It is a higher form of evidence that is demanded for the recognition of divinity. Said Christ: "Believe me. I am of God, and if ye were of God you would know it, and feel the harmony between that which is divine in you and in me. And if you are not able to do this, then believe me for my works' sake,—come down one step more, to another plane of evidence, believe me for my miracles—from a feeling of wonder.

It is probable that those faculties which hunger most for the sight of God are not our highest ones. The occasions for our desiring to have some near sight of the divine Being may spring from the wounding of our best feelings; but after all, those feelings may lead us to desire it as hunger springs from our external selves, and not from our deepest internal selves. We long to behold God through the senses; but that is not possible. That which we could handle with the hand, or see with the eye, or hear with the ear, would not be a God, but would be a body like our own. It is not possible to bring within the comprehension of our lower nature the substance and essence of that which constitutes the divine Being.

We have analogies of this. Take one of the noblest of men, and attempt to expound him to one of the lowest. That which goes to constitute the essential manhood and admirableness of a great nature would be just that which would escape the recognition of an Indian, or of a Hottentot, or of an Ethiopian fresh from his kraal. The highest forms of manhood are not understandable by the lower forms of animalhood in man.

You see what is true in respect to men, if you carry it out, is true everywhere. For example, there can be no doubt that a dog has the instinct of intelligence. No man who is familiar with dogs, who has studied them, and made them companions, can doubt for a moment that there is in them an intelligence which is substantially of the same nature as ours, which by development becomes reason, and philosophic reason of the highest form. You

can make a dog understand one, and two, and three, perhaps; you can interpret to him, it may be, some of the smaller ideas which men have; but would you undertake to introduce Lord Bacon or Shakespeare to a dog? Basilar facts, a few of the lower ideas, you can make a lower animal understand; but there the power of its faculties stops. As you go up to the highest manhood, to the noblest and best things, the distance between them and animal-hood becomes greater and greater. Suppose a dog (and some human beings might be put in the same category) should look up and say, "I have had some intimation that there is a great nature in man; why does he not show it to me?" Because you are a dog, and it cannot be got into dogs. They are not developed enough.

And so it is with regard to the ability of men to comprehend God. It would transform divinity to bring it under the laws of the senses; and, on the other hand, it would transform the human faculties to enlarge them enough to make them capable of understanding, in any degree of fulness, the divine nature, it is so much larger, not only, but finer than they are. Quality enters into it, and not mere quantity. It is in the matter of fruitfulness so different from our nature, and so far beyond that which we are accustomed to deal with, that we are by reason of undevelopment unable to comprehend it. In the lower stage of the development of our being, we have not the power to form anything like an adequate conception of God.

It is impossible to interpret to our rational faculties anything that is lower than we are. You are as far separated from the fly as though he were a million, million, million miles off from you—not by space as every summer proves! but so far as any knowledge which you have of him or he has of you is concerned. You do not know how a fly feels, any more than a fly knows how you feel. You may say, "I cannot transmute my intelligence down to him;" but no more can he transmute his sensations up to you. There is an impassable gulf between you and the things which are below you and cannot be transmuted, as well as between you and things that are above you and cannot be transmuted. There are worms, sparrows, birds, myriads of things, around us and underneath us, and we behold them and recognize their existence, and comprehend them so far as they address themselves to our senses; but we do not understand their nature; and they do not understand ours. What am I to a fly, but something that is going to slap him? What am I to a bird but some creature with a net or gun seeking his destruction? It does not dawn upon him that I am a living, thinking, spiritual being. He has no conception of the qualities of my

nature. And they cannot be interpreted to him. That which constitutes manhood is something higher than the mere physical goes.

Now, carry this analogy upward. God fills infinite space. He transcends in power of faculty, and in absolute perfection, anything that we can form an idea of. And from the beginning of the Old Testament down to the last word of the New, there is no one thing more perpetually insisted upon than the impossibility of by searching to find out or understand the Almighty to perfection. That is nowhere to be found in the Bible which is contained in our system of trig and prig theology, where men burn each other for the ten thousandth part of the variation of a hair, as it respects the divine government, or the divine nature; or where there is a perpetual quarrel between the different denominations as to how high up or how low down Christ is, orthodoxy turning on the utmost accuracy of knowledge in regard to these things. There is nothing of this kind in the Word of God. The Saviour did not rebuke and condemn, in his own time, those who were not accurate in belief or judgment. A want of emotive affinity, a want of heart-love, a want of spirituality—this was what they were blameworthy for: not a want of right intellectual conceptions of divinity. To hear some men talk you would think they supposed that there was nothing more certain than that they knew all about God. You know no more about God than a babe does about its mother. Do you say, "What is the use of a babe's having a mother if it does not and cannot understand her?" Does not a child know enough of its mother to prove to it that she is something lovable?

I remember very well when I was but two years old (strange as it may seem: sometimes I think I spent all my remembering power on that early period!) finding myself in the east entry of my father's great house, alone, coming down stairs, or trying to. The sudden sense which I had of being alone frightened me, and I gave one shriek; and then the echo of my voice scared me worse, and I gave another shriek that was emphatic; and I remember seeing the light stream in from the dining-room, and being taken up by loving hands. The face I do not recall; the form I do not recall; but I remember the warm pressure. It was my mother, who died when I was three years old. She took me to her bosom. I recollect sitting by the side of some one who made me feel very happy; and I recollect seeing my father's swart face on the other side of the table.

Now I could not paint my mother's face; but I know how her bosom felt. I know how her arms felt. I have a filial sense, a

child's interpretation, of motherhood. It was only an emotion or instinct in me; but it was blessed.

And so it is with the soul's interpretation of God. It is not able to lift itself up to all the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the glory of God, or to understand it; but that the soul has a filial instinct which teaches it something of God; that it has a yearning after the divine beneficence and care and love; that it has faith that there is a Being who is just, true, bountiful, self-sacrificing and ineffable in goodness—whatever that goodness may prove to be; that it loves that Being; that it has a sense, not so much of a quantitative as of a qualitative Being; and that its thoughts and feelings concerning the divine Being are conglomerated or interfiliated together, forming one conception—this we can understand. But we cannot understand what is meant. That is where a man's ideas are outrun. That is the point at which men's thoughts stop. No man's reason can go further than that. When it comes to the question of what "God" means, we are dealing with a subject which involves the sum total, the scope, the volume of the divine nature; and this is beyond human comprehension. Our knowledge of God as respects his individuality, as compared with our knowledge of each other, may be sadly imperfect; but there is that in the heart of every man which needs a God, and interprets to itself so much of God as it is competent to understand. It is the heart, crying out, "Abba, Father," that interprets God to us. And the sense, the faith of God present, is the result of faculties higher than the eye or the ear.

I suppose some of you say, "If I could only have eye-sight of God once, it would be a great help to me." I think it very probable that you do have eyesight of God. I think it probable that you look on God every time you look upon anything. "Oh but, if he would only speak to me, if I could have ear-evidence of his existence, what a satisfaction it would be!" I think it probable that God does speak to every one of us. "Well, why do we not know it?" When you take a pin, and lacerate the muscle, it aches. We say that the muscle aches; but no, it is the nerve that aches. Take out the nerve and then prick the muscle; and it does not ache. You may prick it and cut it as much as you please, and it will not feel any pain. So that which is evidence to nerve is not evidence to muscle. Nerve and muscle each have their own laws of evidence and their own modes of proof.

Stop the ears and play a beautiful tune oefore the eyes. A man says, "There is a tune going through the air all the time; I wish I could see it." But can a man see a sound? Can the eye accept

evidence that is addressed to the ear? Or *vice versa*; apply to the ear a picture. Can a man take in at the ear that which addresses itself to the eye? Can the ear act according to the law of evidence which is applicable to the eye?

Now, God is not amenable to the evidence that lies in the eye that sees, or the ear that hears, or the hand that touches. Nothing spiritual can be apprehended by any laws which come down to the horizon of finiteness and the flesh. The eye for this stage of existence, but not for the other. The ear for matter, but not for the spirit. The hands for things visible, but not for things unseen.

I doubt not that choral music is chanted, sweeping magnificently through the air in praise to God; but who hears it? Sometimes, at the hush of twilight, I have almost thought I did; but it has vanished in thinking. Doubtless there are songs sung that we could hear if our inward nature were only open to take them in, which would be as the Mount of Transfiguration to us; but they fall unheard because we are not in a condition to hear them.

When the prophet's servant was stricken with fear lest they should be overwhelmed, the prophet touched his eye; and he saw the mountains and the heavens filled with angels and chariots. And do you suppose that when there are such vast myriads of existent creatures, they are not near to us? Do you not suppose they are in our dwellings, and in the air, and around us, and that they go past us and over us? And yet we never see them. It is not for the eye to see spirits. It is not for the ear to hear spirits. It is not for the hand to handle spirits. Doubtless God is present in his beneficences. He is present, doubtless, not merely in the fruit of his thought, but in his personality—whatever that may be. We cannot form the least conception of it. We may conjecture what it is, for purposes of practical use, but that which we imagine it to be is only a figment of the imagination for this temporary object. It is a legal fiction, as it were. I doubt not that when we are saying. "Oh! that I might see my God," he is before us, and not far from any one of us. He is in the heaven above; he is in the earth beneath; he is in the waters under the earth; and though you take the wings of the morning, and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, he is there. Though you make your bed in *Hades*, he is there. Wherever the thought of man can penetrate, there is God. And when you use these eyes to behold him, you do not see him, because the fleshly eye cannot see spirits, whatever they may be. If you come to look at it thus minutely, we are surrounded with God. He declares that we are in him; that he abides with us; that he comes to us, and makes his dwelling with us.

We long for a vision of God. Oh fools! that long to see God, as if he were in the body, and we did not know that the eye by which we see invisible things is deeper than the external eye! It is the soul's eye, it is the spiritual eye, it is what is called *faith* in the New Testament, it is our inner vision, that brings God near to us.

Now, do we see him by this inner vision? Are we really able to discern him through its instrumentality? This is a question which turns on a matter of fact. We represent to ourselves the personality of God. It is not a question of whether we can or cannot. I do it, and so do you. I do not say that we do it accurately; but there is a sense of God present with us; and it is a sense of God present in personal quality, rather than as an abstract attribute, or as a definite form. The divine presence is warm to the touch. We know that God is near, because we rise up in our feelings to greet him. There are a thousand noble thoughts which come to us in our better moods; and we can trace them to God. Water never rises heavenward unless it is drawn up by the sun, by reason of the warmth of its beams. Were it not for the drawing of the sun, no clouds would be formed, and no rain would fall. And I believe that if it were not for the presence and influence of the divine nature, the social and moral qualities which go to make manhood would not be developed. I believe that those divine influences which draw out these qualities are food for the higher nature of man; and that that higher nature responds to the touch of God; and that to all those who lift up their souls God is present, and in some moods and moments, with overwhelming evidence, most satisfying and most blessed. It is, then, in the power of men to understand personality, although they may not know accurately how to make it up, to frame it, and give it definite bounds. That God is a person who thinks and feels, we learn from ourselves. We take our own qualities and transfer them to him. It is in the power of people to clothe God with personality by elements which are in them, though not in the same measure that belongs to them when they are applied to him. God is true; he is loving, he is long-suffering; he is disinterested; he is self-sacrificing. We know the qualities which go to make up the divine nature. But these same qualities may make a nature in a thousand different forms. The kind of nature which they produce is determined by their proportions and the fruitfulness. We know what these qualities are, but we do not know the grandeur of their ultimate form.

When I was last on the top of Mount Washington, where the snow was lying on the ground, and where the winds

sweep bitterly, both summer and winter, I found some squatting shrubs, almost barren of evergreen leaves. Twisted, contorted, dwarfed trees they were, beaten down, and kept down, by the wind and by the winter; but I saw on them, here and there, a tassel or a leaf which showed that they were black-spruce. And as I went down a thousand feet, I found that the shrubs went up. As I descended from this high elevation, and the climate became milder and milder, the trees increased in height until they were as tall as I am. A little further down they were taller; and still further down they were taller yet; and away down in the lowlands they shot eighty feet into the air. When I first saw these shrubs on the top of the mountain I knew that they were black-spruce; but when I saw them up there I had no idea of what black-spruce was down at the bottom. I understood by its leaf and by its wood what it was up there; but I did not know what the difference in the development of the black-spruce tree was in these different places. It was the same in essence and substance in one place that it was in the other; but how different was it in breadth and height and majesty!

I know what it means to love; but I have no conception of what love is when it rolls in the bosom of an infinite God. I know what the feeling is to forgive iniquity; but what conception have I of the mercy of Him who, from age to age, sitting upon the circle of the earth watching the numberless imperfections of miserable men, shines through them all and still forgives? I know what light is as it shines from my candle, but do I know what the sun is from that? I know what water is when I take a drop of it in my tumbler; but do I know the thunder of the ocean from that? I know that when I see God he will be wise; but how little do I know of the wisdom of God! I know that he will be just and merciful; but how little do I know of his justice and mercy? I know that he will be a God of love, but oh, how little do I know of the extent and grandeur of that love! How imperfect are my slender ideas as means by which to fashion, lift up, augment, enlarge and carry out this supremest attribute of the infinite and eternal God! It is by these qualities that I know my God; but I know him only by specimens, by small samples. My conceptions of him are imperfect. I know him, and I do not know him. He is present with me; I see him in myself and in others; and yet I see him only as through a glass darkly. Who that is finite can form any adequate conception of a God of such purity and sweetness and volume as the God whom we worship?

In view of these interpretations and suggestions, I remark, first, that it is for us to form a healthful conception of God by carrying

up to it all that we can see of him among men, or experience of him in ourselves. I do not mean to make a fanciful use of the phrase, "Christ in you the Hope of Glory"; but, after all, it shadows a truth which I wish to emphasize—the truth that there is to you only so much of God as there is in you. You will understand no more of him than you have of him in your nature.

A man who is absolutely without a musical instinct can form no conception of a musician. A man who is absolutely without courage can form no conception of a hero. A man who is absolutely without avarice cannot tell how a miser feels. A man who is without any sense of honor or truth cannot conceive how an honorable man feels.

You judge of the nature of God from the best things that are in you. The fault of heathenism is, that men, not being developed spiritually, build God out of their fleshly nature, and so build idols. If men, a little more developed, have no higher elements within them from which to build, they can only build from their lower passions; and so they have fiendish, warlike gods. And as men grow more and more noble, and become developed in their higher spiritual nature, they build with right materials, and begin to touch right conceptions of God. If you would know more of God as a reality, let him be more personal to you. Bring more from your own moral consciousness to your conception of him. Judge of him by the things in you that are noblest, and sweetest, and best. See what things are heroic among men of the highest pattern of heroism, and apply them to him. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things," said the Apostle. Whatsoever things you may garner or perceive of the noblest experiences of human life, although they are inadequate materials with which to form a conception of God, they are the best materials with which you can begin to form a conception of him which shall be to you vital, vivid, satisfying.

The God of the Book may help you; the God of the Catechism may help you; the God of philosophy may be helpful to you in certain ways; but, after all, your God springs out of your moral consciousness. It is that which vivifies it and which is to make much of it.

The conception of God, then, demands that we should use our best faculties and our best moods. It is in the direction of moral emotion and exalted imagination that the evidence lies of the

presence and reality of God. What man after a debauch would sit down with a microscope to pursue some critical and exceedingly difficult examination? What man, when his eyes were diseased and inflamed, would sit down as an astronomer to make delicate tests in regard to the transit of Venus across the sun? We bring to scientific investigations our ripest powers and best moods. Who writes poetry when he is rushing through the streets in a car? If a man wishes to write poetry, does he not wait till his highest inspirations are upon him, and then draw himself aside from society, and let his mind ripen in that one direction, and then reap the fruit?

In all other things except spiritual, we dedicate to the class of faculties which we bring into requisition, time and opportunity. You cannot take all things along with you. You cannot give your best thought and your best strength to your business and to the world, and then with the leavings worship God acceptably to him, or in a manner that shall be satisfying to your own soul. Do you hustle through a little catechetical service or a few prayers at stated periods, and then wonder that you have no God? Do you draw near to God as a man should? Do you take those days and hours in which the soul seems ready to fly heavenward like a bird that has crouched on a branch and spread its wings, and is ready to lift itself up in the air, and devote them to God? Do you give yourself by fasting, or if not by fasting by temperance, which is always better, to the noblest exercises of the mind, as a preparation for communion with him? Do you bring your mind to that point of observation by which the noblest ideas to which you are capable of rising are to be gained in order that you may come into sympathy with God?

You go groaning and grumbling up and down the street, and say, "I do not see any evidence of a God. It does not seem to me as though there was any use of basing a hope on a supposition that there is a God. I cannot taste him. I cannot touch him. I cannot see him. Everything goes wrong. There is no moral government anywhere. Everything goes clish-clash, clish-clash. We are tossed about in the world like a skiff on the waves of the sea. I do not believe in a God." Is that the way,—to settle down and feed your skepticism until it benumbs your higher nature? Is that the way,—to take your basilar self and judge of things divine by that? Let a man take a telescope, and reverse it, and how far off things seem! and let a man reverse his own nature and look through it the wrong way,—how impossible it is for him to see God! He is too far off anyhow; and that throws

him hopelessly beyond all reach. The hours in which your highest faculties are most active, and your truest, your best, your noblest ideas are uppermost—those are the hours which you are to give to your God. Do you believe you could give from day to day, in the early morning or in the musical hush at evening, when your thoughts are ripest and richest, one hour to a contemplation of God, and to a sense of the divine presence, and live in doubt? Let there be one hour in every day that is its sanctuary. Let there be one such hour in every twenty-four, and if a man stand in it, God will be there, and make himself known to him. It requires but little. One throb that says "Mine," and hears again, "Thine," is enough.

Why, between those who love most is it necessary that every day there should be a running through the full ceremony of a declaration of love? Is it necessary that there should be the timid approach, the shrinking back, the dropping of the eyes, the hesitation to speak, and the overflowing utterance? No. When one loves, and loves strongly and truly, it takes but a turning of the eye, or a pressure of the hand, to show it. Silence is often more vocal than speech. It takes but little to testify to love. And the soul that is open to the entrance of God's Spirit need not search as for hid treasures for evidence of the divine presence. It does not need to build a tabernacle for itself.

Every day there are hours which are like the dome of heaven, crystalline, through which the soul may see, and through which it may hear something say, above all scientific evidence, and all other evidence, "Thy Lord and thy God."

O sad souls, that have no God that is a comforting God! O souls that have no God to help them lift their burdens! O souls that have a technical God, but no personal God present, so that when they walk down into the dark places—into the valley and shadow of death—his rod and his staff do not comfort them! O souls that have learned to say, "God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Ghost," but are dying for want of God, for want of love, for want of clasping certainty, for want of intense realization!—for you there is this God. You may as well blind your eyes, and say, "There is no sun"; or, you may as well hide yourself in the hard streets of the city, and say, "There are no sweet and tender vines, there is no fresh grass, and there are no beautiful flowers, in the fields," as to say, "There is no such thing as a God of love and sympathy." O children of the humble and sorrowing, this is true; and you are the ones to whom God is nearest and most blessed!

I commend you, then, not to doubt and despondency. I commend you to belief and hope. Seek not to apply to spiritual things the criticisms and evidences which belong to materiality. Believe that you are something more than a body. Believe that the soul has a hunger of its own. Believe that it has intuitions which are based upon certain laws of evidence which belong to it, and which interpret truly, and that they are to be depended upon. Take that evidence which addresses itself to the soul. Lift yourself up to God, and remember that while you are striving, God is helping you. Remember that though "we know not what we should pray for as we ought," "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

There is not a daisy that knows the way above the soil till the sun draws it; and there is not a soul that knows the way to God until Christ has interpreted him to it. Christ was a specimen of that which is the royalty and grandeur of the infinite eternity of God. A God who would rather suffer than have us suffer is calling us up through trials, through sorrows, through manifold experiences, to make us rich, ripe and ready for seeing him as he is when the clouds pass away, and the body falls, and the soul goes forth, not a lonely pilgrim, but welcome and rejoicing as a child of God, to dwell with him forever and forever.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Our heavenly Father, we have much need of thee; and thou hast need of us, in loving. It is thy nature to love the poor, the helpless, the dependent. Thou art Father; and thou dost look down through the infinite space that separates between us and thee, to behold, with compassion, our low estate, and to lend something of thyself to us, that we may grow to that stature of God which we shall forever approach, and never reach. We rejoice that the sources of life are in thee, and not in ourselves. Though thou hast been pleased to permit us to minister and to serve, thou art thyself the Cause and the Power; and forth from thee comes that impulse which kindles ours; the light of our thought is kindled by thine; and thou dost work in us to will and to do of thy good pleasure; so that we are joined to thee in all our work; and our life is but the fringe of thine.

We rejoice that thus we are united by thy counsel and by thy plans to thee, and are grouped around thee. When thou art furthest from our thought, thou art still near; and when thou seemest least to us, thou art still God over all, blessed forever.

We are not sorry for this dependence. We are glad that we are not to be detached from thee. We rejoice that we are for evermore to be held fast to thee by love, and that our sympathy with thee is to grow stronger, and that when we have attained the measure of perfection which is required,

then thou wilt bring us into thine own immediate presence, to see thee no longer through a glass, darkly, but as thou art.

We rejoice, O Lord, in all these dispensations of thy providence by which we are trained to manliness, to patience, to fortitude, to suffering; by which we are trained to generosity, to magnanimity, to heroism. We thank thee for all that by which we are taught to be long-suffering, to be patient in darkness, and to wait for the light when it dawneth not, and, when we cannot see, to hold fast by trust, and live by faith, and not by sight. And may we feel that, though for the present it is not joyous but grievous, afterward it shall work out in us the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

We do not desire to mark out our own path, nor to determine the experiences which shall greet us upon it. We do not desire to measure thy way toward us. But we wish to see in thee a loving Father, and then to say, Thy will be done.

Prepare us, we beseech of thee, for life—for all its exigencies and duties. May we more and more, as the days go forward, and as the years extend themselves, and as our own time grows short, add diligence to every virtue. And may we rejoice, not that we are living, but that we are to attain; not that we are to be unclothed, but that we are to be clothed upon. Prepare us for that rest which remaineth for the people of God. Prepare us for that nobler life which awaits us beyond this. And though we see it dimly, and look for it sometimes, when clouds intervene so that we see it not at all, we believe, Lord: help our unbelief! We trust where we cannot see.

Now, we beseech of thee, O Lord our God, that thou wouldst deal with all who are in thy presence mercifully, as each one needs, and not as each one asks, except as he asks wisely. May we understand our condition, and ask for the things which we need; and may we be hindered from asking the things which we do not need and should not have. May our will evermore be in submission to thine. May we be obedient to thy will. Because our God is glorious in holiness, and full of love and goodness, may we rejoice in him, and exalt him in our thoughts, to be supreme and absolute Master over us. We surrender ourselves to thee. Bear us in the arms of grace and providence; and distil upon us the sweetness of knowing that thou dost love us better than we love ourselves. And whether there be life or death, whether there be light or darkness, whether it be the cross or the staff, whatever be the experience, grant that we may evermore feel that it is the will of God, and so our will. May we learn how to rejoice under all circumstances. May tears bring gladness. May our very sighs ripen into smiles. We pray that thou wilt grant that in all the remaining years of our lives we may take new heart and fresh courage, and labor with more earnestness as the days are shortening. And as the years are rapidly ending, may we do with our might what our hands find to do, knowing that the night cometh when no man can work.

Wilt thou enter every household. Help parents to lead their children, by example and precept, to a godly life. Raise up young men in our midst who shall stand in our places, and be better and more Christian in their daily life than we have been.

We pray that thou wilt comfort all those who are desponding, being under the yoke, and heavily laden. Draw near to all those who are in bereavement, whose thoughts are full of bitterness, and whose memories are clouded. Will the Lord sanctify their afflictions to them. Grant that they may behold how poor a place life is in which to invest the best things of the heart. May they be taught to lay up their treasure in heaven, that their thoughts may be there, where all things are sure, where no storms come, and where no violence disturbs our thoughts or plans.

O Lord, be near to any who are strangers in our midst; and according to their necessities minister to them. May this day be full of blessings to them.

Shake down from the tree of life, if not its fruit, yet its leaves, that all of us may have some taste of them, and receive strength therefrom.

Bless all churches of every name. Oh that they may be more diligent, more devoted, more unworldly in life! Grant that the spirit of contention and division may be taken away from them. Grant that there may be more unity of the spirit, and more of that bond of perfectness—love.

We pray, O Lord, that thou wilt spread abroad the light of truth everywhere. May that which hath made us so happy not be confined to us. May the tidings of Jesus Christ roll through all the earth. And grant, we pray thee, that the day may speedily come when men in every nation shall become preachers of the word, and when the work of God shall go mightily forward, and flourish, and when all the earth shall be brought to a saving knowledge of the truth of God.

Hear us in these our petitions, and answer us not according to our worthiness, but out of the abundance of thy mercies. And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, shall be praise everlasting. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon the word spoken, forgiving that imperfection, that inability to speak, which comes from the sinfulness and darkness of human experience. Draw up our helplessness into power. Draw up our thoughts into truth. Teach us how to draw up our fancies and imaginations, and sanctify them. Teach us how to kindle flames of light along the dark way of doubt and unbelief. O Lord God of our salvation, how we love our little children! And dost thou love us so? How we are willing to throw our arms around about them, to fight for them, yea, to suffer for them, yea, to sacrifice our lives for them, if it be needful! And dost thou feel so toward us? O Jesus, hanging upon Calvary, is this the love of God? How manifest, and yet how small is even that! What couldst thou bring that should represent the magnitude of the eternities? We believe, O Goodness! O Gentleness! O winning Love! O fashioning Power! O Father, *Father*, FATHER! we believe: help our unbelief! And to thy name shall be the praise now and evermore. *Amen.*

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